

NARRATOR: Krebs, John
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: March 14, 2001
LOCATION: Potlatch, Idaho
PROJECT: Smokejumping/Forest Fire Fighting

Tape

Counter	Summary
000	Introduction.
010	Krebs offered a brief biography of his early years; he grew up in the U.S. Midwest. He received a degree in chemistry from University of Kansas. It was on a trip to Idaho to visit his brother and sister-in-law that he became enamored with Idaho. He came back to work for the United States Forest Service that next summer (late 1950s).
035	Krebs gave an overview of all the forest service that he worked on from the middle of the 1950s to the 1990s. He also talked about his service in the U.S. Army in the early 1950s.
060	Krebs discussed enjoying the outdoors while growing up, and that helped him to gain an interest in forestry and the forest service.
080	One important aspect in fire control was lookouts. Krebs talked about lookouts, including their importance. He also mentioned what changes conspired to severely reduce the number of lookouts, but he felt lookouts still could serve as a viable fire control or management tool. With prompting from the narrator, he explained why the forest service wanted two people, usually a husband and wife, on a lookout. He talked about a book, <i>Smokechaser</i> , in which the author spent time on a lookout.
140	Krebs briefly mentioned his feeling when he first came to Idaho in the 1950s, before he talked about how first job with the forest service. He worked on the trail and brush crew, and he described what someone would do on that type of crew and why people on that crew would fight fires as well as service the trails.
180	After he left after his first summer in Idaho, Krebs did not think he would return. He was attending seminary after graduating from University of Kansas. He said that he left the seminary, because "the Lord did not want him in the seminary." He returned to Idaho to work in the forests.
200	One early job for Krebs was planting trees. He talked about being on a tree planting crew, and the protocols (including how and when) involved in planting trees on the national forests. He felt tree planting was more difficult than fighting fires.

235 Krebs learned a lot about various jobs in the forest service. He explained why he worked various jobs and how that helped him advance in the forest service. Krebs took the challenge offered to him and took over a tree planting crew during his second year with the forest service. He said he felt ready to oversee a crew, even though it was only his second year.

305 Krebs worked on a seasonal job, meaning he worked on 10-month contracts. He explained why the forest service did that and how the forest supervisor moved him (and others) from one job to another within a ranger district.

330 Krebs spoke, in detail, about proscribed burning and clear-cut regeneration harvesting, particularly on his district of the St. Joe National Forest. He particularly talked about why the forest service would proscribe burns after a clear cut. He felt strongly about the benefits of reintroducing fire after the loggers remove the trees. He mentioned the positive aftereffects of the "The Big Blowup" (the 1910 fire in northern Idaho).

425 Krebs has given presentations about forest fires since he has retired. He talked about the types of venues that he has presented his information. He felt that he has needed to tell the opposite story that environmentalists have told. He continued to talk about the benefits of fire and proscribed fire.

475 **END OF SIDE ONE**
TAPE ONE SIDE TWO

000 Krebs talked about how wildlife, such as moose and cougar, has arrived in the Palouse district (Idaho Panhandle National Forest) with the harvesting of timber and the proscribed burns after the logging. He mentioned hosting some old high school friends and showing them the forest. He said that his friends were amazed about what the forest service has done.

040 Krebs participated in a workshop in Montana and toured the aftermath of the forest fires in the summer of 2000. He said that places where trees had been harvested the new trees were not touched by the fires. He talked about being a part of a national fire overhead team (from the late 1970s to the middle of the 1990s). He traveled throughout the country, and he talked to people after he left about how the forest has recovered from the fires that he observed. He also mentioned how the people managed the forest near lakes, creeks, and streams and how that management has affected that area.

120 Krebs talked about how fighting fire full time could affect a person's personal relationships. He said that forest fire has become a part of him.

- 150 Krebs did not know for sure when his interest in fire began, although he said it probably occurred when he came to Idaho. He felt he got into the right situations, such as his involvement in timber sales and his career being served almost all in one area, in his forest service career, and that helped foment his interest in forest fire. He always felt that he could express his opinions and ideas about from all of his observations and discussions and experiences on forest fires.
- 205 Krebs thought that some new forest service employees had good writing and academic experience, but they had problems applying it to real life situations.
- 250 In terms of proscribed fires, people either burn in the spring or fall. Krebs offered his opinions about which season to burn. His attitude has changed over time; he went from fall burning to spring burning. In 1988 he began to burn in the spring, and he burned in the spring for the remainder of his years with the forest service. He also mentioned factors, such as weather, wildlife biology, and silviculture, that effected the time and the place he proscribed burning.
- 375 Krebs talked about how current forest service employees followed protocols that make little sense to him.
- 425 In terms of a proscribed fire near Los Alamos, New Mexico, that became a large wildfire during the spring of 2000, Krebs said he would need to see it and talk to the people before he offered his opinions about it. He said that there are so many factors involved in proscribed burning that each burn can be dramatically different.
- 505 **END OF SIDE TWO**
TAPE TWO SIDE ONE
- 000 [No introduction.] During his early years with the forest service, Krebs fought many fires. He talked about the first two fires he fought; the first one was in an area that was part of the 1910 fire. He said the next year, 1959, he fought numerous fires on the St. Joe National Forest. He talked about some of the fires he fought during that year; he mentioned that he fought fires from the end of July through the first of September without a break.
- 055 His first forest service full appointment was a scaler. He talked about the aspects of being a scaler. He said he did not like the job very much, but it gave him entrance into full-time work with the forest service.

- 075 One part of Krebs' job was timber sales. He talked, in detail, about his role as a fire control (or management) officer on these timber sales. He talked about the timber sale protocols have changed over time.
- 135 The interviewer asked all long-time forest service employees about being pushed in different directions by different interest groups. Krebs offered his opinions; he said that when he started, there were not as many negative attitudes towards the forest service. He did see the forest service as "being caught between a rock and a hard place" [interviewer's term].
- 175 Krebs furnished his opinions about the environmental side of the argument. He mentioned a book, *Playing God in Yellowstone*, that has illustrated the environmentalists' role in the forest in the 1980s. He said he retired due in part to seeing plans for the forest being quashed by lawsuits against the forest service.
- 240 **END OF SIDE ONE**
END OF INTERVIEW

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

1910 Fire (“The Big Blowup”)

Avery, Idaho

Darby, Montana

Missoula, Montana

Neuenschwander, Leon (professor at University of Idaho)

Playing God in Yellowstone

St. Joe National Forest (Idaho)

United States Forest Service

Yellowstone National Park

NARRATOR: Krebs, John
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: September 26, 2001
LOCATION: Potlatch, Idaho
PROJECT: Smokejumping/Forest Fire Fighting

Tape

Counter	Summary
000	Introduction.
010	Krebs talked about changes in transportation during his years with the United States Forest Service. He also mentioned certain changes that really aided fire management.
100	Along with changes in transportation, there were numerous changes in communication on a fire. Krebs talked about these changes, particularly the change in the type of radio used. He told a story about communication during the 1959 fire season.
180	With prompting from the interviewer, Krebs talked about any possible over communication on fires.
215	According to Krebs there were also changes in equipment to fight fire, although some equipment, such as the Pulaski, has never changed. Specifically, he described the change in use of saws, fire engines, and fire-creating devices, such as mechanical torches.
310	Krebs explained the importance of lighting fire to aid in managing a large, project fire.
360	Along with all of these other changes, there were changes in policy or bureaucracy. Krebs discussed these particular changes. For one example Krebs talked about prescribed burning with its changes over time.
450	During a significant portion of his career, Krebs worked on an incident command team. He talked about aspects of an incident command team.
485	END OF SIDE ONE TAPE ONE SIDE TWO
000	Krebs continued to discuss the incident command team structure. Krebs worked on his team as a fire behavior analyst; he explained what that specific job entailed. Krebs offered some general examples of fires he fought as a member of his team.

- 115 With prompting from the interviewer, Krebs described in detail his role as a fire behavior analyst. He specifically mentioned the effect of weather on the fire behavior analyst's role.
- 185 Since Krebs worked on the same district of a national forest for over thirty years, the interviewer wondered if he learned about the weather on the district. Krebs talked about the weather on the district and about the change in monitoring the weather on the district. He offered a couple of examples of how the weather was not constant throughout the district and how they figured out that fact.
- 300 While fighting fire in Texas, Krebs talked to the local people to find out about weather patterns. He said he tried to do that (talk to the locals) everywhere he went.
- 325 Fighting fire at night, according to Krebs, had benefits and detriments, depending on many factors. Krebs told a story about the Sundance fire in Idaho to illustrate his opinion about fighting fire at night.
- 370 Even though the Sundance fire was near Krebs' district, he stayed on his district and did not help with that blaze. He talked about a fire near his district, but since there was no interagency cooperation, his crew was not asked to help the state fight the fire.
- 405 With prompting from the interviewer, Krebs described how fighting fire works in the age of interagency cooperation. He continued to describe the fire season of 1967 with the Sundance fire and the Trapper Peak fire in the area.
- 450 **END OF SIDE TWO**
END OF INTERVIEW

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Deary, Idaho

Los Alamos fire (New Mexico, 2000)

St. Joe National Forest (Idaho)

Sundance fire (Idaho, 1967)

Trapper Peak fire (Idaho, 1967)

United States Forest Service